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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT MA YING-JEOU'S INAUGURAL SPEECH

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave significant news reporting and editorial coverage May 21 to President Ma Ying-jeou's inauguration ceremony and his inaugural speech Tuesday, in which he emphasized that both sides across the Taiwan Strait will resume dialogue based on the "1992 consensus." The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a banner headline on page five which said "[Ma's Camp Has] Communicated with the United States over the Draft of [Ma's] Inaugural Speech, but It Has Not Been Reviewed by the United States." The pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged an opinion survey, which showed Ma with a 66 percent approval rating after he was sworn in Tuesday.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" criticized Ma for failing to mention Taiwan's sovereignty in his inaugural speech and said Taiwan will embark on an "irreversible journey of being united by China." An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said "a crossroads is approaching, and the KMT must decide whether it wishes to promote Taiwanese interests or act as a proxy for a foreign government that quietly despises it." An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also feared that Ma will not lead Taiwan forward to the future but will drag its hard-won democracy back into the past. An analysis in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" said Ma's inaugural speech indicated that he had taken the strategic high ground by especially emphasizing the U.S. in order to counterbalance China's military and economic power. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" hailed Ma's inaugural speech as having revived Taiwan's internal recognition of "the Republic of China" and urged Chinese President Hu Jintao to recognize the reality of the existence of "the Republic of China." An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" expressed high hopes for Ma and said that Ma "will be able to rally all the people of Taiwan behind him to usher in a new era of prosperity." End summary.

A) "A Taiwan That Is Ripped off of Its Sovereignty Will Embark on the Irreversible Journey of Being Unified [by China]"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (5/21):

"... President Ma's inaugural speech discussed a wide range of issues, but throughout the entire speech, he never mentioned a word about Taiwan's sovereignty. He even firmly believes that 'in resolving cross-Strait issues, what matters is not sovereignty but core values and way of life. Was Ma implying that that were other core values more important than that Taiwan is a sovereign nation? ... The Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan right now is nothing but a shell company for an alien regime in Taiwan. Not only does the ROC not possess Taiwan's sovereignty, but it is also a big barrier against Taiwan becoming a normal country. President Ma came up with the incorrect discourse on 'one China with respective interpretations' because of his lack of an accurate understanding of historical facts. ...

"China enacted the Anti-Secession Law in 2005, which incorporates [the idea that] 'Taiwan is part of China' as its domestic law and thus makes it a plain fact that there is no room for respective interpretation under the one-China principle. This incidence also indicated that the key to the final resolution of cross-strait issues lies in the controversy over [Taiwan's] sovereignty, and the source of such a controversy is that Taiwan is a sovereign state, but China is keen on suppressing Taiwan's status as a sovereign nation, and it intends to annex Taiwan using military intimidation and economic united front tactics. President Ma [seeks to] rip Taiwan off of its sovereignty and is bent on significant opening [of Taiwan's market] and puts his hope for [the island's] economic revival on measures such as [easing the bans on] direct transportation and visits of Chinese tourists. Even though Ma claimed that 'unification with China was not likely within our lifetimes,' there are chances that Taiwan will follow Ma's line and embark on the irreversible journey of 'being unified' [by China]. This was why President Ma's inaugural speech worries us."

B) "Ma Ying-jeou: Crossroads President"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (5/21):

"Following his 'no unification, no independence, no use of force' campaign pledge, President Ma Ying-jeou told The Associated Press recently that unification with China was not likely 'within our lifetimes,' an extraordinary comment that discredits the narrative of detente that haunts credulous media coverage of cross-strait affairs. Hopes for the acceleration of cross-strait cooperation with a view to a peace deal are likely to be dashed if China is unwilling to fall into step with Ma's realistic assessment. But a human lifetime

is an eternity in geopolitics: It is ludicrous to think that Beijing would indefinitely tolerate a Taiwanese agenda rooted in this assumption. A crossroads is approaching, and the KMT must decide whether it wishes to promote Taiwanese interests or act as a proxy for a foreign government that quietly despises it. ...

"Ma's undertaking to improve relations with the US is welcome and necessary, though it should be stressed that a lot of the practical damage to that relationship was the doing of Ma's colleagues in the KMT. On substantial matters such as weapons sales, Ma has an opportunity to use his party influence to strike deals with a KMT-dominated legislature. However, KMT figureheads such as Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung and Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng are not going to lie down to do the Presidential Office's bidding, even on matters of obvious benefit to the nation. Ma must also overcome the profound hostility toward the US that remains among hardline KMT legislators, as well as battle the notorious kickback culture of the Legislative Yuan. ...

"Ma has not been seriously tested as a high official, and as a loyal KMT man, he has rarely had to live up to the highest of public expectations. But no one should be under any illusions: These tests are coming. It will only be a short time before Ma begins to feel the pressure from Beijing, KMT hardliners and ordinary Taiwanese to deliver results. These are incompatible agendas, and Ma's customary kneejerk responses when under heavy political pressure would exacerbate problems rather than deflect them. Now is the time for Ma to be his own man, stare down his party rivals and implement an agenda that upholds the living standards and freedoms afforded by a sovereign, democratic state, as well as rallying people who share these goals around him."

C) "Ma Begins Road with Step back"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (5/21):

"In his inaugural address yesterday, Kuomintang President Ma Ying-jeou declared that he was ready to lead Taiwan into a 'new era' that will bring political reconciliation and ethnic harmony, clean governance, economic liberalization, social progress and peaceful cross-strait relations with the People's Republic of China. However, the content of Ma's woodenly delivered speech served to

deepen concerns that his presidency and the restored KMT 'complete governance' will not lead Taiwan to 'open our arms to the future' but drag our hard-won democracy back into the past. ...

"Ma's failure to reaffirm the right of the Taiwan people to decide their own destiny is therefore a fundamental negation of the Taiwan democracy which he praised at the end of his speech. Another aspect that was regrettably absent was any reference to how to safeguard Taiwan's national security, collective interests and the social security of our 23 million people in the process of promoting 'reconciliation and co-prosperity' with the authoritarian PRC and the implicit authoritarian position that such concerns should not be discussed or the dangerously naive assumption that security problems did not even exist in Taiwan-PRC relations. ...

"Ma's call for a 'truce' between Taipei and Beijing is an exercise in wishful thinking, as has been discussed on numerous occasions, but the more serious aspect is the new president's evident intent to exaggerate his electoral victory into a blank check to adopt a 'China-centric' ideology and as a mandate to enter into a 'co-prosperity' sphere with the unstable and inequitable PRC economy. By unfairly completely negating the record of the DPP government, the KMT leader lost an opportunity to demonstrate a statesman-like rationality and pragmatic tolerance through offering a more balanced evaluation of the DPP's experience and instead delivered a ringing insult to the opposition party and to the 5.44 million people who cast their ballots for Hsieh on March 22. ..."

D) "Ma's Strategic Thinking of Befriending the United States to Counterbalance China"

Journalist Lin Ting-yao noted in an analysis in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (5/21):

"Judging both from the contents of Ma Ying-jeou's inaugural speech on May 20 and his itinerary that day for receiving foreign VIPs, they all manifested a special signal: Namely, the Ma administration paid more and unusual attention to its ally, the United States, than to the goodwill gesture it extended to Beijing. ... If one wants to interpret Ma's inaugural speech precisely, one needs to scrutinize the cross-Strait relations under the light of international situation. Ma started out [his elaborations on the cross-Strait relations] from his insistence on what is best for Taiwan and for its people, and he is aiming at the global market, not just the Chinese market, to which he will eventually open Taiwan. ...

"At the current stage, it is Ma who is making all the moves, dictating the cross-Strait issues and awaiting Beijing's responses. But the hidden concern is, as a Chinese scholar specializing in Taiwan affairs indicated, that 'this is creating a difficult problem for Beijing. Now, in order to enlarge Taiwan's elbow room in the international community, Ma has again tossed off [the idea of] 'reconciliation and truce' to Beijing. Unlike the DPP's order in calling for 'dignity, security, and prosperity' [for Taiwan], Ma adjusted it and said [Taiwan] wants 'security, prosperity and also dignity.' His re-assertion of [Taiwan's] dignity will surely create another headache for the other side of the Taiwan Strait. The fact that Ma took the international strategic high ground to counterbalance China's military and economic strength by befriending the United States deserved affirmation. But Beijing definitely will see [Ma's intention] and as a result, even though Ma has assumed presidency, it remains to be seen as to whether spring will arrive for cross-Strait relations."

E) "The New Birth of Taiwan Is Established on the Rebirth of the Republic of China"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (5/21):

"... [Taiwan's] President Ma Ying-jeou and [Chinese] President Hu Jintao both used the term 'historical opportunity' to describe the current time and circumstances that both sides across the Strait are in. Both [Ma and Hu] should have known clearly that, as [this article] described above, this presidential election [in Taiwan held in March] is as good as letting Taiwan's voters save the Republic of China from the hand of [former Taiwan President] Chen Shui-bian, who cursed that 'the Republic of China' has died. Therefore, it will

only be when Ma is able to create 'the regeneration of the Republic of China' in the future and Hu respects 'the 1992 consensus, one China with respective interpretations' that the Taiwan voters standing in front of ballot boxes will be willing to support the political identification and cross-Strait policy of the Republic of China. If 'the Republic of China' cannot be maintained, cross-Strait relations will be difficult to maintain as well. If both authorities across the Strait have this recognition, then they will know that the two slogans in the end of Ma's speech yesterday, which Ma said 'long live Taiwan's democracy and long live the Republic of China!' might echo with each other. In fact, a normal relationship between both sides across the Strait has to be built upon a normal relationship between 'Taiwan's democracy' and 'the Republic of China.' When 'the Republic of China' loses the support of 'Taiwan's democracy', cross-Strait relations will definitely go off. This is a difficult problem for Ma, and a realization Hu should have. ..."

F) "Ma Breathes a New Life into Taiwan"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (5/21):

"... With Ma at the helm of the state, Taiwan ceases to be a flashpoint of the world. Ma isn't a trouble-maker like President Chen, who provoked China with his brinksmanship by pushing for Taiwan independence to win elections for the Democratic Progressive Party. Mutual trust between Taipei and Washington may be re-established with the change of government. Relations between Taiwan and China are expected to improve after Ma begins calling the shots in Taipei. For starters, he called on Chinese President Hu Jintao to resume dialogue between Taipei and Beijing on the basis of the consensus of 1992, under which both acknowledge there is but one China, whose connotation can be orally and individually expressed. ...

"With his inauguration, President Ma will be able to rally all the people of Taiwan behind him to usher in a new era of prosperity. Taiwan brought an economic miracle of the Twentieth Century. There is no reason why the people with their 'Taiwan spirit' can't work hard together under him to rewrite a new page in history. The way to prosperity isn't strewn with roses. Plenty of obstacles lie ahead. They can be removed if the people, who have a new unity of purpose, join hands to get things done. Ma is working to get that unity of purpose. People have faith in him. He has inspired them to work for a better future, not just for Taiwan but for the other side of the Strait as well."

YOUNG